AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1-24. (Canceled)

25.   (New) A method for processing mailpieces having graphic information located on a surface of a mailpiece comprising:

ascertaining the graphic information;

associating the mailpiece with a mailing type on the basis of the ascertained graphic information;

identifying at least one of the mailpiece, a mailer, and a recipient's address on the basis of the mailing type;

determining a number of mailpieces processed for the mailer from the identified mailpiece, the mailer or the recipient's address;

combining the ascertained graphic information from a plurality of mailpieces;

determining a delivery structure from the combination of graphic information;

comparing the number of mailpices processed for the mailer and the delivery structure to a delivery job batch; and

comparing the delivery job batch to a customer data record that contains one of a prepaid postage value and a limit postage value;

wherein the delivery job batch is transmitted by a customer or created if a customer does not transmit the delivery job batch.

26.   (new) The method of claim 25 wherein the step of ascertaining includes ascertaining at least one additional piece of payment-relevant information about the mailpiece.

27.   (new) The method of claim 25 wherein the step of ascertaining the delivery structure includes checking whether the mailpiece was pre-sorted by the mailer.

28. (new) The method of claim 27 wherein the step of determining the delivery structure further includes checking whether the pre-sorting was carried out on the basis of addresses of the recipient.

29. (new) The method of claim 27 wherein the step of determining the delivery structure further includes checking whether the pre-sorting was carried out on the basis of postal codes of the recipient.

30. (new) The method of claim 27 wherein the step of determining the delivery structure further includes checking whether the mailpieces were pre-sorted according to mailing properties.

31. (new) The method of claim 27 wherein the step of determining the delivery structure further includes checking whether the pre-sorting was carried out according to one or more size specifications.

32. (new) The method of claim 27 wherein the step of determining the delivery structure further includes checking whether the pre-sorting was carried out according to the weight of the mailpieces.

33. (new) The method of claim 25 wherein the step of ascertaining the graphic information includes ascertaining an identification number for the mailpiece and invoicing the mailpiece according to the identification number.

34. (new) The method of claim 25 wherein the step of ascertaining the graphic information includes ascertaining a customer number for the mailpiece and invoicing the mailpiece according to the customer number.

35. (new) The method of claim 25 further including one of the step of ascertaining an invoicing database on the basis of the number of mailpieces processed for the mailer and the step of ascertaining the invoicing database on the basis of the delivery structure.

36. (new) The method of claim 25 further including the step of transmitting the delivery job batch to a customer data management system, the customer data management system determining whether there are discrepancies between an invoicing data record and the delivery job batch, and if there are discrepancies, the customer data management system recording the discrepancies in a differential protocol.

37. (new) The method of claim 25 further including the step of checking whether the customer has transmitted the delivery job batch, and if the customer has not transmitted the delivery job batch, generating a delivery job batch automatically.

38. (new) The method of claim 25 further including the step of issuing a delivery confirmation to the mailer on the basis of the graphic information.

39. (new) The method of claim 38 wherein the delivery confirmation contains one or more components of the delivery structure.

40. (new) The method of claim 25 further including checking the authenticity of franking information by using the mailing type, transmitting the mailpieces to a reading device and transmitting the graphic information of each mailpiece, according to the mailing type, to a specialized reading device that checks the authenticity of each particular type of franking.

41. (new) The method of claim 40 comprising ascertaining the graphic information is associated with a type of franking by means of an image processing unit.

42.   (new) The method of claim 40 comprising selecting the specialized reading device as a function of the current capacities of available reading devices.

43.   (new) The method of claim 25 further including the step of comparing the ascertained graphic information to an expected graphic information and transmitting any differences to a central image processing unit for another comparison.

44.   (new) The method of claim 25 further including the step of comparing the ascertained graphic information to an expected graphic information and determining an expected payment for the mailpiece from the comparison.

45.   (new) The method of claim 44 wherein the comparison of the ascertained graphic information to the expected graphic information includes the steps of comparing the detected graphic information to the expected graphic information via a means in the area of the mail processing station and comparing any discrepancies between the ascertained graphic information and the expected graphic information via a specialized reading device.

46.   (new) The method of claim 25 further including the step of transmitting the detected graphic information and any accompanying information to an image processing machine.

47.   (new) The method of claim 46 wherein the accompanying information includes results from comparing the detected graphic information and the expected graphic information.

48.   (new) The method of claim 25 further including the step of sorting the mailpieces as a function of the detected graphic information.